Fred Battle
Interview by Bob Gilgor
January 3, 2001

RG: This is January 3 in the year 2001, and this is Bob Gilgor interviewing Fred Battle at Public Works in Chapel Hill.

Good morning, Fred.

FB: Good morning, Bob.

RG: I'd like to start this morning with a question that's very broad, and that is, tell me about your growing up in Chapel Hill, what it was like, when you were born and where you grew up, and your family and the schools.

FB: Bob, I was born in Chapel Hill, I was born on Hillsborough Street, which most blacks referred as Windy Hill. And Windy Hill was, well, to enter Windy Hill, you had to go through the white community. And to exit Windy Hill you had to go through the white community. And it was just a segment of black homeowners that lived on Windy Hill. Chapel Hill is somewhat unique because what it did, it manifest people of the same economics being together. And we had a lot of interactions with the people that lived in the neighborhood, which would be classified in today's terms as poor white people. And they were friends, we looked after one another, they were pretty supportive in their role, and some of these friendships is lasting friendship. But, it's carried on. And then again, you had some extremists, where it wasn't nothin' to get up and see a KKK written in the middle of the road, sayin' "Get the hell out, niggers." That was a pretty common practice in that time.

But that's somewhat the environmental condition that you lived under. Schooling, I went to Northside, that was the elementary school. And I guess my first two years we had so many students that they had to send us to school in shifts. You had one group would go for a half day in the morning, and another group would go for a half day in the afternoon. We didn't have the benefit of having the full day of the education. But we had dedicated teachers. And they would make sure there was a learning process in place. And they had high expectations for our students. So that was quite helpful. And then there was a relationship between the teachers and the parents. The teachers would go and make home visits to the students, and visit with the parents, and let the parents know what the expectation for that school year would be for the students. After elementary, going to Lincoln, and Lincoln was somewhat, about two and a half miles from where I lived,, and we walked.

RG: No school bus.

FB: No school bus. We walked to Lincoln every morning, and we walked back in the afternoons. And in the process, we would always have to pass by Chapel Hill High School, which was located on Franklin Street, and then there was the elementary school there too, in order to get to Lincoln, which was located on Merritt Mill Road. And it would always phase in our mind, wouldn't this be a lot better, if we could attend this school, rather than have to walk down to Lincoln. But Lincoln High School, under the guidance and direction of Mr. MacDougal, at the time, who was the principal, but he's also, he was a surrogate father figure. Not only was he concerned about you at school, he was concerned about you and your well-being after school. And he would follow it up. And it was a great relationship that you had. He was a disciplinarian, which he didn't allow people hangin' out in the hall. You didn't have a hang-out in the hall, without an excuse. And he would enforce these policies. And then he would make sure that he was supportive of the teachers, and making sure that the assignments, and that he had a working

educational environment that was conducive for all students to learn. Even though we might not have had the best materials and I guess we were getting some of our books which was passed down from the white Chapel Hill High School to Lincoln. We were getting secondary books.

But it was still, we were still able to utilize the resources that we had to make and progress in those conditions. As I relate to the football program as well as the band, under Clark Egerton (?) they were one - and Mr. Bell - one of the best band in the state. They drew praises every time they performed. The same thing with the football program, and I was fortunate enough to play football at Lincoln for three seasons, and I was captain of the last state championship football team, in 1961. (?) We were fortunate enough to win two state championships during my three-year tenure on the football team. And what it boiled down to, it boiled down to makin' the best out of the resources that you had. A lot of times we would practice, and would practice late, and the coach would have to pull his car up there and shine his lights so we could see what we were doin' at night, during the course of the practice. We weren't fortunate enough to have lighted fields that we could practice under, and also the turf that we would practice on was just about clay. Red clay. And we made use of that, and we took those disadvantages and made them into advantages, where we were able to excel. A lot of my classmates and former football players went on to play college ball. Some went on to coach at the college level.

And it inspired the inspiration where we figured that we were motivated, we could do just about whatever we wanted to do, if we worked hard enough at it. I would always look, as I would walk down the corridors of the hall in Lincoln, and I could still hear some of the teachers speakin' now. Giving guidance, giving direction, giving praise, and all the motivation that we would need to be excelled as students and as students and athletes, and I always use this tool now as a parent, and dealin' with my kids. Lettin' them know that if they work hard, and if they pay the price, they can be just about whatever they want to be. And it has been a working tool for me. I use it on the job, I have a number of employees that I supervise, and I try to give them the same type of motivation. What we call it, the old school motivation. And it has been a successful project. What Lincoln means to me, Lincoln is a home away from home. This staff is surrogate parents. They dealt with you, they were firm, but they were fair. And they gave you the type of inspiration which made you want to succeed. There were no low expectations; they made every student feel that if you're proud of yourself you can succeed. And this is what benefited me the most.

The community as a whole at that time, everybody lived in one area. That was the black community. It was strong. The church was strong. The church provided the guidance and direction, and they were supportive of the school. And I can recall when we played football out here at Lyons Park in Carrboro, we would have just as many white spectators as we would black. Because everybody come that want to see Lincoln play, because they know Lincoln exemplified an excellence in sports. And you would look up there, and the stadium would be packed. Every time. And Chapel Hill is a unique place. We had our strength. Strength number one has always been the school. We had the church, we had the community, and then we had the community center. And that has always been a successful project for us.

RG: Tell me about your parents, if you would, Fred.

FB: My father, really, he was employed with the university as a janitor. My mother, she did housework, and maid work for people in the community. Their education, both of them had finished high school. And I think at that time high school was eleventh grade, equivalent to eleventh grade education. And, but they were inspiring people. My mother was more the head of the household than my father. She was the one that made sure that we would sit down there and we would make sure that our homework was done, and she lacked patience in some ways. Because she didn't have the patience for not knowing. She expect for you to know, she dwelled on that, and it wasn't nothin' to get whippin's. In this day and time they would call it child abuse.

And I think in the time that I came about they would call it, it would be child abuse if you *didn't* get the disciplinary support that you need to be functional in this system. And so, they were great people. My father, he passed in 1975, and my mother's still living.

RG: You have brothers and sisters?

FB: I have three sisters. One of my sisters has, all of them have finished school. All of them have finished college. One of them has a law degree. All three of them have their masters'. The whole works.

RG: (Inaud)

FB: Oh yeah.

RG: What was your neighborhood like? Did you play in the streets, or did you go to the Hargaves Center, the community center for recreation after school?

FB: Well, we did both of them. I think number one, it was quite common to come down to Windy Hill and you would see us playing football. We had an open field, we'd be playing in the open field. We had a basketball goal already set up, we'd be playing basketball. And then occasionally in the spring and summer of the year we would venture over to Hargraves.

RG: You had mentioned that home visits were made from Northside teachers. Were home visits made from the high school teachers as well?

FB: Uh, yes, we had – R.D. Smith, you said, to take shop. And he would definitely, he was a firm believer in keepin' in touch and contact with the parents. And not only that, he would come and he would expect you to be present too.

RG: You had mentioned that your principal, C.A. MacDougal, was like a surrogate father, and you said something about he would follow up. Could you expand on that more? What did you mean by his following up?

FB: Well, Mr. MacDougal was one that, like I said, he was a strong disciplinary person. He, it wasn't nothin' for him to be standin' in the class as the teacher's instructing the students, you know. He would attend the classroom, sometimes sit down there. And he'd make sure that the information that you should be receiving that you were receiving, and do just an overview of the participation of classes. And if for some reason you didn't exemplify the learning attitude, it wasn't nothin' for him to call you in the office and talk to you about it. Sit down one on one. And also, this helped too, because it gave him an opportunity to appraise the teachers and their presentation and how they was presenting the subject matter to the students.

RG: He was really an activist – he was in the classroom, he was in the hallways.

FB: He was in the hallways – he was a one-man team there. They used to call him Mr. Mac. And he was the one that really kept the school in terms of running, and made sure that we had what we need to operate. And also he was primarily responsible for making sure that we had a learning environment in the school system.

RG: When you finished Lincoln, did you go on and get any further information?

FB: Yes, I went to North Carolina, I played football at North Carolina A&T, where I received a BS degree, and as a matter of fact, I was instrumental in the boycott in '62-'63, where we

desegregated the Woolworths. Also played football with Jesse Jackson – he was on our football time too.

RG: Can you tell me, did you go to A&T on scholarship? And if you did, how did you get that scholarship?

FB: I went to A&T on a football scholarship. And I got that on the merits of my participation on the field, as well as my academics.

RG: Did you feel that the teachers, did you have a counselor, who helped you with going on for secondary education, or is it something you just did on your own?

FB: Well you know, I was blessed to have two strong coaches. And both of our coaches assimilated the father images. Bradshaw, he was my coach at junior year, and he was just like a father to us, you know. Sometimes we might be in a study class, and he would take us out of study class and put us in the gym and we would shoot basketball, he'd have you working on your deficiency in terms of the game. Also he would give you words of encouragement. He would try to seek out scholarships for you and everything like that, and get you in school to make sure that you are traveling on the right path. Peerman, who cam in my senior year, was a dynamic coach. We just named the Chapel Hill football stadium after him and Coach Calter (?), wo was the head coach out there at Chapel Hill High at that time. So both of them were dynamic people, they gave us the leadership, and they took a personal interest in our well-being and our well-development.

RG: When you were growing up and playing sports at the high school, were you playing in a league that had schools that had the same number of students, or did you play up a level, against schools that were a different class? Like they were 3A, 2A, 4A schools.

FB: Well, we played by student population, we would have been classified as a 2A school. But we played in a 3A division. We also played some 4A teams. We played Hillside, teams like that at times. And we, like I say, we excelled. We played schools higher caliber, and it presented some good rivalries. And good times.

RG: How did you do against these schools that were 3A and 4A?

FB: Well, we played in 3A division, even though we, student population would have been probably a 2A school, but we were classified as 3A. We won championships there. At 4A, we probably, we probably had a split with Hillside, 2-2, at that time. (pause) Small thing probably I'd like to mention in terms equipment, special football equipment. We received a lot of our equipment from Carolina – we had a pretty good relationship with Carolina at the time. And we would get shoulder pads, helmets, hip pads, knee pads, stuff like that from them. And uniforms, we generally we were able to purchase our uniforms through fundraising and other things, other events. But Carolina was quite helpful. Even the trainers of Carolina football teams. Sometimes we'd encounter some injuries, where we'd need to have a whirlpool or something like that, and the athletic trainer from Carolina would let us come down there, sit in the whirlpool or hot (?) or whatever. So they worked with us on that.

RG: Was Morris Mason involved in any of that? (inaud) recovery from injuries?

FB: I think Morris was behind it. It's always good to have somebody on staff that you know and who can relate to some of the problems that we were experiencing. And especially when you're talking about lack of resources. He was behind it, because he also had a lot of, some of the times we had some of the football players would come down and watch us practice and give us tips on what to do and whatever.

RG: Was Carolina integrated at the time you were playing or were these all white players who were coming down to give you tips?

FB: These were mainly white players that were coming down to give us tips. Carolina at that time was not integrated, in terms of the – the school was somewhat integrated, but the athletic teams were not.

RG: So you really had a mixed bag of relationships with the white community, it sounds like. You had some whites who dealt with you in a nasty way, and some whites who dealt with you in a very positive way.

FB: That is true. And it's similar to what you experience today. (laughs)

RG: What about when you would be playing in your neighborhood? Did the blacks and whites interact there?

FB: Yeah, we had a pretty good relation with the blacks and whites there. There were whites that would come down and play with us, (?). It didn't seem to have as much tension as you have today. I feel a lot more tension in terms of relationships, the co-existence of relationships, with white people today as I have experienced in the past. Because I guess one of the things, when you saw a white and he wanted to interact with you, you could rest assured, during that time, that he was genuine. And now they do it not out of necessity, but sometimes they are not genuine in the interaction they have with you, but it's just a process that you go through.

RG: Let's go back to the school. I'd like to talk to you about the PTA. Were your parents involved with the PTA at Lincoln High School?

FB: All parents, just about, were involved in PTA. PTA was one of our cornerstones of the school system at that time. And especially when you're lookin' in terms of lack of resources of whatever. You had networking going on: the PTA, the church, the community. And all of them, they came under that umbrella of the PTA.

RG: What did the PTA do for the school?

FB: Well PTA was one of the chief fundraisers for the school. Whatever was lacking – band uniforms, sometimes curtains for the stage, lines or stuff for the gym or scoreclock for the gym – the PTA was instrumental in providing those type of resources for us.

RG: So how would they raise the money?

FB: PTA could, they would generally have fundraising, to raise money, whether it was plate selling or whatever, they would ask for contributions from their community. They managed to get the money some way. They were a driving force. Just like, I know we forget, and I don't know, one of the things in the school system that was probably a big cultural event was our May Day. You know, you'd be surprised at the number of people that would come out on May Day, Ma 1st every year, and see, we would have a program that the school would manifest. Wrapping the pole and stuff like that. And each class would be responsible for performance, some type of drama task. But it was an activity that brought the community together again. And it steady remains in my mind, of how we were able to get together. And how the school itself participated. How the community supported it. How everybody felt like they were part of it.

RG: So when you say the community together, do you mean the African American community or do you mean the white and the African American community?

FB: We're talkin' about the Afro-American community, because they were the primary supporters of it. Getting parents out to see their children participate in programs was big.

RG: Can you tell me about the band at Lincoln High School, and their community performances more specifically? Anything you want to say about the band, but also about when they marched in the Christmas parade and Homecoming, and the response to it.

FB: Well, this is one of the, probably it's the biggest activity that we had, seein' the performance of the band.I don't know whether you remember a couple of years ago, when Hillside used to come in with their band, and the amount of attention and excitement that was had over that. People enjoyed the majorettes. They were down, in terms of performance. Execution was just about perfect. We used to have some nice-looking majorettes, and occasionally you'd have people out there that were spectators that tried to grab 'em, you know. The band was one of the highlights. When you're talking about Lincoln, you're talking about the Lincoln band, you're talkin' about the athletic programs, you're talking about the educational programs. And I think a lot of that is what excelled. They had a concert band too. They did. They would play just in concerts. And that was super. We'd do that for graduation or whatever, you know. So the band was one of the highlights of the area. It was magnificent.

RG: Did they march in the Christmas parade?

FB: Well, they marched in the Christmas parade. We had a Homecoming parade, and then we were invited to participate in the other Christmas parades and other Homecoming parades in other cities.

RG: Oh, where did you go?

FB: We went to Durham, I think we went as far as Greensboro.

RG: Would you say that with your parents working, did you have a lot of freedom when you came home from school? And how did you, how were you disciplined at those times when you were by yourself or you were out in the community, out and about?

FB: OK, we're probably speaking of, in my high school time, I didn't have that much time, because at football – we had football practice. And it's probably around 8 o'clock each night before I get home. OK? Then after football season's over, I played basketball, ok? So, that presented the same type of dilemma. The only time I probably got a break was probably around April. And what we did there, I generally would go home and you know, I was of high school age, we would go, everybody would have a tendency to meet over at the Center. And that would be where we would probably exercise our leisure service at that time. But most of my time was committed. Then when I was younger, in the elementary and the junior high level, I had chores at home that I would have to do. What relates to getting' the wood in, you know, getting' the grass cut – anything that needed to be done. You would have that to do. Then you would get into your studies.

RG: What about the neighbors' role, if you needed help for one thing or another? If there was a problem at home, would the neighbors step in and give you a hand? Would the neighbors discipline you?

FB: Well, if a neighbor saw that you were wrong, they saw that your behavior, your conduct wasn't what, that of expectation, then they wouldn't hesitate to correct it. And then they'd let your parents know, also. OK? And I think that's what personified a stronger disciplinary action. You didn't encounter what you would encounter today, where you could see a kid that might be sayin' something using profanity, and you try to correct him. And the parents would literally

jump on you for talking to their kids. Back then, that wasn't the case. The parents believed in adult over a child. And they would tell you what they did. And then you'd wind up, you might get a whipping from them, you wind up getting another whipping. It was the same thing with teachers. You know, if your conduct and your behavior wasn't of the right nature in school and you caused a disciplinary problem, the teacher would, they would, they was whipping us in school. You get a whipping in school, then you get another whipping when you got home.

RG: How about in high school – how did they discipline in high school?

FB: Believe it or not, I was receiving whippings up till my senior year in high school.. I had one teacher, Miss Minnie D. Turner, would tell me to come on back here, Battle, get behind the clothes rack, hold your hand, and (laughs) – she was whippin'. But I think this too was one of our strong points. Because what it has done, it has created a atmosphere of conduct and behavior that we expect from other adults, and other people. Kid's wrong, he's wrong. And I say this, just like I was the director of Hargraves for about 18 years. And out of 18 years, I never had a problem with disciplining a kid. Some of them, we had to use what you call corporal punishment. Whippin'. And I've never received a complaint from a parent about that. But I, you know, it's fair across the board. Even my kids, if they came over there and they misbehaved, they got the same treatment the other kids received.

RG: What was the relationship of your parents with your teachers at Lincoln High School?

FB: My parents and Lincoln – like I say, my mother was the vocal point as far as any action in the education process. My father didn't do too much. After workin' at the university, he was a very quiet type person, subdued. He didn't, wasn't one for doing a lot of interaction with other people. But my mother, it depends on what the situation was. If I received a low grade at one point, she would inquire about this, why did he get this, what did he need to do to bring this up. Get more of a kind of report on the report card.

RG: What do you think Lincoln High School meant to the African American community when you were there?

FB: There's no doubt about it, Lincoln High School was probably one of the chief cornerstones of the black community. It was a place that not only we could go in terms of education. It was also a place that we knew that, in going in here, that there were certain expectations that was expected out of us. Now if you wanted to try the system and not live up to the expectation, then you would encounter a problem. And you would encounter the consequences of that problem. But I think most people, what it really presented, it presented a place of love and affection that was shown to all students by the staff. It presented an affection that sometimes you didn't get from your parents. That gave you the motivation, that you are somebody, and that you can make it. And that all you have to do is apply yourself.

RG: Did you find the same thing when you went to A&T, the same kind of supportive, loving environment?

FB: You know, when I went to A&T, I guess it was a different contrast. I guess I was disciplined enough where you were told what to do, and you were told, you know, this is your first class, you got to go here, you got to go there. When you got in college, those parameters wasn't there. You had a class at 10:00, you might not have another class till 2:00. You had more freedom to adjust to. And it wasn't as structured as the high school was. And then you had to re-discipline yourself because that could be abused. But if it was abused, then you'd have to pay the consequences. And if you want to lay in and not go to class, there's a penalty. So it took upon a different type of task, in terms of learning. But once you adjust to it, it wasn't no problem.

RG: You mentioned that the high school was very structured. Would you say that your whole life growing up, the whole African American community in Chapel Hill was very structured?

FB: In a sense, yes. Let me relate to that. You know, we had the blue law in Chapel Hill at the time. And that's where no stores or nothin' was open on Sunday. OK? As a result of that, then, people were mainly confined to goin' to church, stuff like that on Sunday. And it was a family activity. The whole family attended church. So the church, in a sense, was a larger structure. Church was a powerful institution. And this is what made the school as large, because it had the church support. (inaud) Like it wasn't nothin' for us to have, let's say, study class after school. Teacher was there, they had people if you needed help, need assistance or whatever. Which was good, because a lot of times they wouldn't get paid for it, but just did it out of their dedication that they did this, to help the students, to make sure that they would excel at whatever they decided they wanted to do. But getting' back to the church, I can recall where we used to have church activities, Bible school, and at that time it was held in the summer, and used to be packed. Used to be packed. You used to look at four five hundred kids. Those were elementary age kids. And they went through similar or the same type programs as at school. You had your classes, you have your opening ceremony that began the Bible school, you allegiance, your prayers and everything. And then you moved on. It was half a day. But see, it wasn't no, let's say, summer camps or nothin' like that that kids have today. That was it for us. And I think then we might have had more latchkey kids, but it wasn't latchkey because the community itself watches over the kids. And your neighbors watch over, and I think that was the kind of closeness that you had. At that time, too, there was no such thing as people locking their doors at night. Everybody left their doors open. During the summer months, you would have to sit out there on your porch till about twelve or one o'clock, before you get the house cooled down, you could come in. But you know, it wasn't no such thing as a class system either, because we didn't look upon anybody as probably bein' rich, anybody bein' poor. We were all in the same class.

RG: All struggling?

FB: All struggling.

RG: Did you have any middle class - business, teachers, ministers?

FB: Yeah, we had some middle class. But see, the middle class, what they did at that time, they do in the community itself. So you couldn't look at their status quo as being present with elaborate –

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Side 2

RG: So even though they may have had more money, they lived in the same community, same kind of house?

FB: Same kind of house. Right.

RG: How about your summers, Fred? How did you spend your summers? Did you have recreational facilities? Did the church provide some activities? Did the school provide some activities?

FB: During the course of the summer, I think, other than the Vacation Bible School, depend on what age you're talking about. Let's see, ever since I was 14 years old, I worked during the summer. OK.

RG: What kind of work?

FB: Did construction work. I was a laborer. I was big for my age, and as a result, nobody asked me how old – they assumed I was 16 or 17. At that point my friends and I, we worked in the summer. And then another thing too, we would have training for football during the course of the summer. Getting' in shape, we'd always get together, condition, stuff like that, so when football practices began on August 15, which is was every year, August 15, we'd be prepared.

RG: Where did you have your training facilities?

FB: Well, there wasn't actually a training facilitiy. It was just a bunch of the football players got together. And sometimes we went down to Enson Field at UNC. And we practiced there, ran the tracks or whatever. And other times we might go over to, which is now known as Hargraves. It was a time, too, that we used to go down here to UNC, what they called the Tin Can. And at that time, they had weights and stuff, and normally not that many students in there. They'd let you go in. But occasionally they'd have a lot of students there, run you out, knowin' that you wasn't a student. You couldn't produce an I.D.

RG: Well I know it's not what part of what I'm here for, but I'm intrigued by your role in the Greensboro sit-ins, the lunch counter sit-ins at Woolworth, and I wonder if you could share some of that with me?

FB: OK, well let's talk about the sit-ins in Chapel Hill too. I did participate in that, but we had Colonial Drugstore, the Rock Quarry, a number of other restaurants around here that we were able to desegregate. And what it caused, students, with the leadership of some adults like Hilliard Caldwell and some others, we began to demonstrate and ask the peoples for service at the lunch counter, stuff like that, and they refused. So we would boycott and picket 'em. And people's unique (laughs) in a sense. Because A&T, the organizer at that time had decided that you know, we were goin' to Woolworth. I think Woolworth had been picket, targeted earlier, and they had their lunch counter sit-in with three A&T students. But it was only a year later where we emptied the university. All the students went to jail. And for a week, A&T couldn't hold no classes, because they had no students. All the students was in jail. So they filled the jails, they had rest homes – they filled any kind of vacant building they had.

RG: How did they get into jail – by sitting in at Woolworths?

FB: Well yeah. Really you would walk up and the police officer would tell you that if you didn't move, you were trespassing, and you refused to move, so they put you onto the bus. And they would transport you.

RG: Were you one of the organizers of the sit-ins, or were you one of the people sitting behind the counter watching?

FB: I was one of the people that – just a participant. Wasn't an organizer of it. We were just on campus and the guy said well look here, man, I guess, a couple of the students went up to get service, and they refused them, and they arrested them. And the word got around on campus that day. So everybody (inaud).

RG: How long did it take to get service at Woolworths?

FB: I think that year, '63, Woolworths started serving, they opened their lunch counter. But it was the same way, just like, let's reflect back to Chapel Hill (inaud). The community set up, that's where you had the Varsity Theater, Carolina Theater, in Chapel Hill. Then we had a Rialto Theater in Carrboro, on the main street. That was a black theater. But here again, if it left scars on me, the scars are there for me, it's the fact that I would have to pass these theaters to go to the Rialto Theater. Or if I went to the Carolina Theater in Durham, I would have to sit up in the

balcony, you know. The same thing with the bus, you know, most people that lived in Chapel Hill occasionally went to Durham to do their shopping, that big Sears and Roebuck was in Durham. And here again, you would sit on the back of the bus and go there. Same thing with the restaurants, water fountains, whatever. The theaters, you had to bypass the theaters and the school. I think it did more damage to me as to make me realize what this thing, this segregation is all about. Because I had to deal with that on a constant (?). And occasionally what we did, we got a person, black person that was real light-skinned. And to fool the system, we got him to go in the theater. And they were unable to detect the difference.

RG: In a way that was a surrogate victory?

FB: In a way it was a surrogate victory, but not the type of victory we were lookin' for, because, we were wantin' (?) the pigmentation of his skin, color. We wanted to have it so that everybody that wanted to go in and be able to observe a movie would have that freedom of choice. And the other thing that, I don't know whether I had told you, I, like Ed Caldwell, was on the school board in Chapel Hill.

RG: Tell me about that. When were you on the school board?

FB: (Laughs) I served on the school board from '85 to '90.

RG: What was that like?

FB: Well, it was a good experience in a sense, that at that time we had a black superintendent, Jerry House (?). We had, well, with me there was three black school board members. And I can remember, at one time, when one of our white colleagues resigned to move to another city, we had four. We brought Ed Caldwell in on an intermittent basis. So that gave us four. We never had four before. And it was a good experience. We were able to examine a lot of the policies and stuff like that, and make sure that they were fair. Makin' sure that the component was built in that would not segregate against anybody. So it was a long process, long process, because you definitely had to do your studying, you definitely had to read your material. But I think Ed and I, and I think (?) now, were probably the only three natives that ever served on the board. OK, Edith Wiggin(?), Ted – Ted was probably a native, but Ted didn't grow up in Chapel Hill. He grew up in New York. Then Brother Manley, he was the first black school board member. But you know, he's been here long enough to be a native, but he wasn't a native, you know, as far as the original Chapel Hillian.

RG: What kind of scars do you think you carry? You mentioned a couple, in passing the white school and passing the white theaters on a regular basis. Are there other scars that you feel you carry with you on a regular basis from growing up in segregated society?

FB: (Laughs) Well, you know, here again, sometimes, I had to be familiar with my limitations, ok? And that's been that total integration, I never had experience till after college, when I got in the workplace. I came from segregated community, went to segregated schools, segregated churches, segregated college. But integration to me took place in the workplace. And yes, sometimes quite painful to think that we have not progressed no further than what we have. Yes, when people look at you by the pigmentation of your skin rather than your productivity. Yes, when you talk to people and you don't feel there's a certain amount of acceptance, or that people feel like they're doin' missionary work just by socializing with you when you go to a function, so you won't be that black that's standin' out. And not bein' able to interact with other people, (?). It has left scars, and some of the scars that it has left, you just don't forget. I've had a boss, that's when I was workin' with the Coca-Cola company in Atlanta, Georgia, who for some reason could not pronounce Negro. OK, it was always Nigra. And after a long discussion with him, I found out

that it wasn't his pronunciation, it was the fact that he just didn't want to change. He's adopted. (?)

And I guess the other thing that disturbed me more so than anything is that along there – (?) we're into an integrated society or system, the more radical that the segregationists(?), you would think after 1960, 1964, when the Voters Rights Act was passed and everything, and there seemed to be more progress they made in the 60s and the 70s. Then all of a sudden the progress for racial injustice seemed to have stopped. The whites seemed to think that the blacks have arrived or have been given the opportunity to arrive. And that no longer should we have the quota system and stuff like that. And then another thing, as you look at I guess the 21st century, you would think that we have accepted where we are and can really interact with one another in brotherly love. And it wouldn't be looked upon as I'm bein' black or you bein' white. It would upon as I'm bein' a man and you bein' a man. That has not changed. It's still the black-white connotation that you run into every time you go. Some of it's said, and some of it's not said. I guess earlier it was the closet type racism that you run into. But now, racism is runnin' about. It's runnin' about. And I don't see it getting' better. The most segregated time of the week is at 11:00, church service. I assure you, people got a right to feel comfortable where they go and worship. But we should be past that stage. That's what I'm talkin' about. Same thing with jobs and job promotion. You know, you run into that. It's more of a clique. So those are the things, you got to keep your eyes open. Just like, I talk to my kids sometimes. And they don't know enough about the racism, but they experience it. And they generally experience it, it begins at junior high level and goes till the high school. Elementary (laughs), they (inaud).

RG: You were just mentioning, Fred, about the fact that you were in school when they had prayer in school, and when prayer in school stopped. Could you expound on that?

FB: Oh yes. It appears that once a school, and we had prayer in school, it seemed as though we were closer united together. And I was in school also around '57 when the Supreme Court made its ruling that you could no longer have prayer in school. And a year or two later, you could start seein' a moral decline in the school system. And I guess now it has expanded upon the fact that we would always feel safe in school. It would always a safe refuge for the students, the faculty, but now kids don't feel safe in school. They don't have that religious experience that's needed, where we can respect each other. And somehow, somewhere, we got to get back to that. And even though when the Supreme Court announced about prayer in school was prohibited, we still did it, somewhere underlying. We still had it. Because it was manifest in us, as bein' a living experience. And it was a part of our moral values and our character. And I think this is one of the reasons that we had such a strong institution like Lincoln at that time.

RG: Is there anything more that you want to talk about, any subjects that we haven't covered, or something we've covered that you want to revisit and talk some more about?

FB: I think the thing, if I can re-emphasize one thing, we've always had a strong cultural value at the school. We was always abreast on any kind of changes that were made, and there were blacks have contributed to. We were strong in black culture. And this is something that you don't find now. You don't see it now. I know we're living in an integrated society, but this is one of the things that made Lincoln as great as it was. We had an identity. We knew where we had been, and we had a pretty good idea where we were going.

RG: Thank you. One other question I wanted to ask, that is, did your parents teach you not to be prejudiced? What were their feelings about racial prejudice? What did you grow up with?

FB: Well you know, from what I gathered from my parents, bein' that they were employed in the white system, was the fact that it was a sense of respect that you were supposed to have had for white people. And as a whole, I never had the fortune to sit down with my parents and discussin'

the integration and stuff like that. They would mainly tell you that that's the way it is, and that's the way it always had been, and they don't foresee no changes. Then the other thing that they mentioned to you because they thought that if you did go out there and try to make some changes, what some of the consequences would be. Dealing with the white radicals, KKKs, or whatever. There was danger that was instilled upon them from knowin' what the capabilities of white people was at that time, if they rebelled against your action.

RG: What about their jobs? Did they, were they concerned about their employers' attitude toward them if they were out marching or their children were out marching?

FB: Well, that was always a problem. You weren't gonna get too many parents going to marching, and even with the teachers and the principals, you know, most of them felt like the time wasn't right. And I think a lot of it had to do with some of the faculty felt like the white superintendent was gonna look upon them and saying that they ought to be able to control their students. The parents are in fear that their job might be in jeopardy if their son is out there demonstratin'. And this would be one way of the white parents protest, how to get back at them. Their son's participation or their *children's* participation in the demonstration. So there was always that problem.

RG: Thanks.

End of side 2.